



Facts and Resources on Child Firearm Suicide

Gun violence has a devastating impact on children in America. **In fact, 40 percent of child gun deaths are suicides**—nearly 700 child gun suicides each year.¹ One study showed that over 80 percent of children under the age of 18 who died by gun suicide used a gun belonging to a parent or relative.² For people of all ages, access to a gun increases the risk of death by suicide by three times.³

Most people who attempt suicide do not die—unless they use a gun.⁴ In fact, 90 percent of suicide attempts with a gun result in death—a much higher fatality rate than any other means of self-harm.⁵ This contributes to the fact that 40 percent of child suicides involve a gun.⁶

A national survey of high school students found that 17 percent had seriously considered attempting suicide within the last year.⁷ And one study showed that 41 percent of adolescents in gun-owning households report having “easy access” to the guns in their home.⁸

Signs to look out for when concerned that a loved one may be suicidal:⁹

- Prolonged sadness and depression
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Hopelessness
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing/Isolation
- Aggression or agitation
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Talking about killing themselves

Research shows that secure firearm storage is associated with a decreased risk of child firearm suicide. One study showed that households that locked both firearms and ammunition had a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries among children and teenagers.¹⁰ **The risk of gun violence and self-harm have grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, with kids experiencing increased levels of stress and isolation, and more guns being purchased. These factors make it even more important that firearms are stored securely.**

Some additional key steps you can take to support your loved one include: inviting an honest conversation, listening and supporting your loved one, and encouraging them to see a mental health professional or a primary care physician.¹¹

Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Call 1-800-273-8255. Available 24 hours a day.

Trevor Project, the LGBTQ youth suicide prevention line

Call TrevorLifeline at 1-866-488-7386.

Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the United States, anytime, about any type of crisis.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Children aged 0 to 17.

² Renee M. Johnson et al., "Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?" *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6, (2010): 609-611.

³ Andrew Anglemyer, Tara Horvath, and George Rutherford, "The Accessibility of Firearms and Risk for Suicide and Homicide Victimization Among Household Members: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 160, no. 2 (2014): 101-110.

⁴ Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "Disrupting Access: Addressing Firearm Suicide in the US," (2018) <https://everytown.org/2N7oig3>.

⁵ Andrew Conner, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, "Suicide Case-Fatality Rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014: A Nationwide Population-Based Study," *Annals of Internal Medicine*, (2019): 885-95.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Analysis includes children aged 0 to 17.

⁷ David C. Grossman et al., "Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries," *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005):707-714.

⁸ Joseph A. Simonnet et al., "Psychiatric Comorbidity, Suicidality, and In-Home Firearm Access Among a Nationally Representative Sample of Adolescents," *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72, no. 2 (2015):152-159.

⁹ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "Risk Factors and Warning Signs," <https://bit.ly/2bmWnQx> accessed February 25, 2020.

¹⁰ David C. Grossman et al., "Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Injuries," *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707-714.

¹¹ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "When Someone is at Risk," <https://bit.ly/2rIVdir> accessed February 25, 2020.